

HOW THE GUIDE DOG MOVEMENT
BEGAN.

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

The first serious and methodical training of dogs as guides for blind people began in Germany in 1916. A doctor in charge of a clinic of war wounded, was called away from a blind man with whom he was walking in the grounds. He left his alsatian to look after the man and was so struck with the response that he started training dogs specifically for the purpose.

In the early 1920's, Mrs. Harrison Eustis, an American, founded the 'Fortunate Fields' kennels at Mount Pelerin, Switzerland for breeding and training Alsatians for work with the Swiss and Italian Police, the Army and for work with the customs service. Mrs. Eustis heard about the work being done in Germany to supply trained dogs to guide blind people, and in 1925 she went to see a training centre in Potsdam. She was very impressed and as a result wrote an article which appeared in the American 'Saturday Evening Post'.

She received many letters; one from Morris Frank, a young American, himself blind, who asked if she could provide him with a dog so he could return to America and arouse interest in the work, and perhaps do something towards helping other blind people to obtain guide dogs. Mrs. Eustis arranged for a Mr. Humphrey, who was in charge of her training establishment, to go to Germany to study the work and then come back and train a dog for Morris Frank. This he did, and in 1928 Morris Frank became the first American Guide Dog Owner with 'Buddy'. He later wrote a book about his experiences and called it 'The First Lady of the Seeing Eye'.

"It so happened that no one else answered the request, nor had Mr. Frankland been consulted in the making of it. But he immediately asked me

to go and see him and he, himself blind, was so tremendously enthusiastic that something just had to be done.

"At about this time, Lady Kitty Ritson had been given a bitch, 'Lona', which had worked as a guide dog in Germany. She was given to her by Herr Rittmeister von Stephanitz. Lona had been the guide of a blind man in Germany. When he died, the authorities did not wish her to go to another blind man as she had been so passionately devoted to her late owner. So Lady Kitty brought her to England.

"Knowing how interested Mrs. Bond of Yorkshire was, I wrote to her and, after some correspondence, we decided to approach Mrs. Eustis.

"Mrs. Eustis told us of the difficulties and the essentials of the work, that there was no book, nor could any but a trained trainer be entrusted with work on which the blind person's life would depend. After more questions and answers, she asked us, Mrs. Bond and me, to meet her in London and to prepare and bring with us a draft scheme for the training of a class of dogs and blind people, with the estimated costs and so on.

"We met Mrs. Eustis on the 23rd September 1930, in London. She had already been to St. Dunstan's and the National Institute for the Blind to see what their feelings were. At St. Dunstan's it was turned down, but at the N.I.B. Mr. Eagar, the

Secretary General was interested and ready to interest his committee.

"Our draft plan was based on Mrs. Bond's kind offer of the use of her place in Yorkshire, in the country, but Mrs. Eustis said that the training must be done in a town, that it must be near one of us, so it would have to be in Wallasey, where I lived. She told us that she and L'Oeil qui Voit were prepared to lend us a trainer to run a trial scheme to train four or five dogs and blind people. Mrs. Eustis also advised us to invite two more people to join us to form a nucleus of our future committee. Mrs. Bond and I decided to ask Captain A. J. C. Sington and Lady Kitty Ritson because we had known them both to go out of their way to help other people. Captain Sington became our chairman."

By their efforts £284. 8s 6d was raised. The N.I.B. (later to become the R.N.I.B) asked this committee to attend a meeting in London in February 1931, when they were told that the collection of this money was quite illegal! However, the committee, having collected this amount, wanted the work to proceed, and so it was suggested that the only solution was for the Guide Dog Committee to be-

come affiliated to the N.I.B.

A spare piece of land was found in Wallasey and the owner allowed it to be used for training purposes. A lock-up

garage was rented for use as dog room and store, and preparations for training the first class began. Mrs. Eustis lent a trainer - Mr. G.W. Debetaz. He arrived in England in July 1931, accompanied by

How the guide dog movement began.



The first guide dog training class, from left; Mr. A. Caldwell and Flash, Mr. G.W. Lamb and Meta, Mr. M. Frankland and Judy and Mr. T. ApRhys and Folly, taken in Wallasey 1931.

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From: Det and About, Spring 1978

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Mr. Humphrey who chose the dogs for the first class.

Wrote Miss Crooke: "A group of 28 Alsatian bitches were brought for testing in London and Birmingham and when they arrived in Wallasey Mr. Humphrey chose seven -

Meta of Hortbaden, given by Miss Workman
Judith of Ceara, given by G.M. Fullerton
Flash of Ing, given by Miss Hemingway
Detector Peggy, given by Mr. C.A. Kaiser
Folly of Hawkstone, given by Mrs. Brian Hill
Fenella, given by Mrs. Bond
Grayfleet Elf, for which we paid £2 10s 0d

"The training started. Our expenses were not too high. Mrs. Eustis paid the trainer's salary for the first course in order to help us so there were no salaries at all, only the trainer's lodgings, the feeding, kennelling and equipment for the dogs and, later, the lodgings for the blind people.

"As the training period ended, Mr. Humphrey came over again to test the trained dogs and to help in the first part of turning them over to the blind.

"Five men had been asked to come; of these, one proved unsuitable

physically and temporarily spoiled his dog (Peggy). The others, who were successful and left with their dogs, were:— Mr. Frankland himself, with Judy; and three St. Dunstaners, A. Caldwell (Flash), T. Ap Rhys (Folly) and G.W. Lamb (Meta).

"The bitch Fenella did not come through training (health) and Grayfleet Elf was kept as a reserve. As we could not have any more training for some months and she was a very good worker, she was sent to America with a batch of trained dogs from L'Oeil qui Voit, where she did well.

"After six months the reports from our four blind men came in. They were all highly enthusiastic and successful."

In 1932 Mrs. Eustis lent another trainer, Mr. G. A. Gabriel, who came to England in July and trained a further four men successfully in the October of that year.

About this time Lady Schuster was invited to join the Committee and she worked tirelessly for the Guide Dog movement for the rest of her life. It was largely through her efforts that Capt. Hobbs of the Tailwaggers' Club joined the Committee, when the financial side was becoming rather a problem, and helped to raise some £100 which, together with a loan of £100 which the N.I.B. agreed to make, enabled the training to continue.

Capt. Hobbs became the Hon. Treasurer of the Association, a position which he held until his death in 1935. Sir Victor Schuster succeeded Capt. Hobbs as Hon. Treasurer and was later to become Chairman for two separate periods until 1953, after which he continued

as Vice Chairman until his death in 1963. The Lady Freda Valentine was appointed Hon. Treasurer in 1939. She held this position until the end of 1977 and still continues to serve The Association as an active member of The General Council.

Returning to early 1933, Gabriel trained a further four men and then left to go to Italy. The question of a permanent trainer arose. Mrs. Eustis offered a trainer whom she thought might be suitable, and he arrived in this country in October 1933. His name was Capt. Nikolai Liakhoff, a former officer of the Russian Imperial Guard. He trained the next class, and many more to follow, and became the first Director of Training. For the last five years of his life, prior to his death in 1962 (on his 65th birthday) he acted as Consultant to the Association.

September 1933 was something of a milestone on the financial side, because it was in this month that Mr. Roger Eckersley, who had been closely connected with the B.B.C. since its beginning, and had now joined the Committee arranged for Christopher Stone to make a broadcast appeal. This brought in £754. 14s 9d and the first thing was to pay back to the N.I.B. the £100.

At the end of 1933, Mrs. Eustis moved her training establishment from Switzerland to America where it merged into the existing 'Seeing Eye' concern. Mr. Debetaz eventually became head of 'Seeing Eye'.

During 1934, as things were becoming financially difficult, it was suggested that the Guide Dog Committee and the Tail-

Guide Dog Owners qualifying

BOLTON

Mr. Norman Allison of Leeds with Dicken
Mr. William Aldridge of Birmingham with Fresia
Mr. Leslie Ball of Nottingham with Emblem
Miss Christine Barrow of Leeds with Adele
Mr. Trevor Berry of Liverpool with Oscar
Mr. Stephen Bilynskyj of Oldham with Oban
Mrs. Anne Birchall of Leyland with Beth
Mr. Raymond Bourne of Stoke-on-Trent with Kojak
Mr. Colin Carter of Scunthorpe with Pat
Mr. Jack Chapman of Stoke-on-Trent with Julian
Mrs. Vera Cook of Kirby-in-Ashfield with Kiska

Mr. L. Dale of Hull with Tricia
Mr. Harry Dickinson of Weston Super Mare with Pepe
Mr. David Egerton of Whitchurch with Francis
Mr. Wm. Emmerson of Cheadle with Josie
Mrs. Elizabeth Erangey of Liverpool with Lassie
Mr. Colin Fisher of Scotforth with Suki
Mrs. Joyce Graham of Ilkeston with Cherry
Miss Janet Grime of Glossop with Paula
Miss Doris Hackett of Malpas with Vale
Mrs. Edna Hambley of Keighley with Vicky
Mrs. Patricia Hardwick of Skelmersdale with Zola
Mrs. Bessie Heeney of Accrington with Glenda
Mr. Robert Hinde of St. Helens with Chinka
Mr. Ernest Hughes of Manchester with Lantis
Mr. Peter Hunt of Ripley with Garry
Mrs. Margaret Hurst of Stockport with Vagabond
Miss Christine Jackson of Beeston with Jarvis
Mr. Kenneth Johnson of Mansfield with Baden
Mr. Richard Ickringill of Keighley with York
Mr. Hubert Lewis of Huddersfield with Marvel
Mr. Gordon Lister of Bradford with Rikki
Mr. Graeme McCreath of Eccles with Emma
Mr. Albert MacPherson of Doncaster with Zia
Mr. Christopher Nies of Nottingham with Wendy
Mrs. Lucy Norris of Manchester with Shauna
Mr. Colin Palmer of Blackpool with Heather
Mr. Terence Prater of Sunnyhill with Wanda
Mr. William Rawlinson of Manchester with Maja
Mrs. Sheila Rushton of Bolton with Olga
Mrs. Kate Schofield of Oldham with Emma

Any home movies?

The Association will be celebrating its Golden Jubilee in 1981. We are hoping to undertake a television documentary and if any reader has, or knows where we can obtain, any movie film of guide dog owners or guide dog training, please would they contact John

MacOmish at London Office, Alexandra House, 113 Uxbridge Road, Ealing, W.5. telephone: 01-567 7001. Obviously the older the film the more likely it will prove of interest to television. The same applies to still photographs.

How it all began

waggers' Club should join forces. This was agreed, and the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association was formed. From that time the financial and committee work was carried out at the Tailwaggers' offices in London, and this continued until 1948 when the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association managed to set up their own offices in Piccadilly.

On the training side, at the end of 1934 an unoccupied house "The Cliff" situated almost on the seashore, was acquired from the Wallasey Corporation at a very small rent. Here staff and students were housed and some improvised kennels

were built. Work went on until the outbreak of war, when the house was requisitioned as an anti-aircraft battery. With great determination Capt. Liakhoff continued the training, keeping all his equipment in an old shed. The students were housed in all sorts of boarding establishments. Later on "The Cliff" was destroyed by bombing.

Having lost "The Cliff", other premises had to be found, and Edmondscote Manor in Leamington Spa was chosen as a suitable venue for a training centre, and subsequently purchased. With a great deal of hard work and limited resources, kennels

were built and Edmondscote Manor, run by Capt. and Madame Liakhoff, was gradually transformed into the first permanent Training Centre.

Since this time the Association has made a great deal of progress, and in 1950 a second Centre was opened at Exeter. In 1961 the first Training Centre to be purpose-designed and built was opened in Bolton. In 1965 a fourth Centre was opened in Forfar, Scotland. In 1977 the fifth was opened in Wokingham, Berkshire.

The Association now breeds the majority of

its own dogs at its Breeding and Puppy Walking Centre situated at Tollgate House, near Warwick.

The Headquarters and administrative offices are now in Ealing, London.

The guide dog movement has spread to many other countries, including Australia, South Africa, France, Israel, Holland, Italy and the Scandinavian countries. Some of the names chosen to identify these schools, such as Guide Dogs for the Blind, Seeing Eye, Leader Dogs, Pilot Dogs, Guiding Eyes etc., clearly indicate the purpose of their existence.

Guide Dog Owr

Mrs. Jane Sergeant of Bradford with Su
Mr. Robert Siddall of Bottle with Una
Miss Pauline Simpkin of Manchester with
Mrs. Mary Simpson of Liverpool with V
Mr. Stanley Skelhorn of Manchester with
Mrs. May Sullivan of Manchester with J
Mrs. Irene Taberner of Warrington with
Mr. Ivor Webster of Doncaster with Ols
Mrs. Susan White of Nottingham with Ja
Miss Jennifer Wilson of Abergele with A
Mrs. Patricia Wissett of Manchester with

EXETER

Mr. Maxwell Ash of Paignton with Hon
Mr. Robert Beard of Southampton with
Mrs. Evelyn Berry of Yeovil with Elsa
Mrs. Elizabeth Candlin of Bournemouth
Mrs. Dorothy Carter of Havant with Sh
Mrs. Alice Church of Bath with Norton
Mr. John Churchill of Buckhurst Hill wi
Mr. Malcolm Coleman of Whitchurch wi
Miss Phyllis Day of Poole with Quince
Mr. Alan Edge of Birmingham with Zoe
Mrs. Edlina Edlin of Bath with Penny
Miss Davina Esdale of Bournemouth wit
Mrs. Alice Evans of Swansea with Delila
Miss Audrey Frood of Plymouth with L
Mrs. Irene Gardiner of Exmouth with Fi
Mr. John Greenwood of Bodmin with Ju
Mrs. Gloria Grantham of Havant with To
Mr. David Gray of Bristol with Quaker
Miss Eileen Halpenny of Co. Lough with
Mrs. Edith Harbor of Newport, Isle of W
Mrs. Joan Howard of Weston-Super-Marc
Mr. Thomas Kincaid of Portsmouth with
Miss Hilary Leacock of Cheltenham with
Miss Celia Lee of London with Lisa
Brother Louis Le Hec of Newbury with
Mr. Michael Meaney of Limerick with U
Mr. Terence McDowell of London with T
Mrs. Nancy Mills of Southampton with C
Mrs. Janet Moore of Poole with Salote
Mrs. Sheila Moore of Exeter with Worth
Mr. George Murphy of Trowbridge with
Miss Philomena Nally of Co. Westmeath
Mr. Alan Newall of Cardiff with Kendal
Miss Edith Newton of Weymouth with B
Mr. Aldred Penny of Maesteg with Olivia
Mr. William Oke of Gloucester with Flin
Mr. Ronald Rabey of Plymouth with Ale
Mr. Hugh Radford of Plymouth with Hu
Mr. John Savage of Bristol with Bengie
Miss Norina Staples of Cheltenham with
Mrs. Pamela Steggles of Ross-on-Wye wit
Mrs. Sheila Taylor of Shanklin with Silve
Mrs. Myrtle Werriett of Dursley with Jus
Mr. Douglas White of Birmingham with N
Mr. Douglas Wilson of Rainham with Cas
Mr. Robert Wroth of Bodmin with Trale

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